

Grinnell College FERPA FAQ for Faculty

What is FERPA?

Sometimes called the Buckley Amendment, FERPA is the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

What if the student signed a FERPA waiver? Can third parties contact me then?

Faculty do not have the ability to verify possession of a waiver to disclose educational records. Refer the third party to one of the College's FERPA compliance officers: [Registrar](#) or the [Associate V for Student Affairs](#)

Does FERPA still apply if the third party is paying the student's College bill?

Yes, as a matter of institutional policy, written authorization from the student is required to release any portion of their educational record to a third party, even to the parent of a dependent student.

How many students block their Directory Information?

As a Grinnell College faculty member, don't I automatically have access to all Grinnell College students' educational records?

No. FERPA permits disclosure of a student's educational record without written consent only to school officials with a legitimate educational interest. Generally, a school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs access to an educational record in order to fulfill their professional responsibilities. Please see the [FERPA Glossary](#) for more information on what defines a "legitimate educational interest."

Can I post lists of students and their grades outside my office, on the department bulletin board, on my website, etc.? I'll use their student IDs, not their names.

No. Posting grades in this manner would be a violation of FERPA. The law strictly prohibits the public disclosure of personally identifiable information (PII). Please see the [FERPA Glossary](#) for more information on what defines a "personally identifiable information."

Can I leave a stack of graded assignments in a box outside my office so students can pick them up at their convenience?

No. Returning graded assignments in the manner described is a violation of FERPA.

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I've heard about so-called "passive" disclosures. What are they and how do I know if I'm doing it?

Passive disclosures are unintended releases of protected student information, usually through simple carelessness or a lack of planning. Passive disclosure includes leaving paper records unsecure (e.g. visible on your desk or in an unlocked cabinet), failing to log out of a public use computer, walking away from your personal computer without securing it, or even positioning a computer monitor where it could be seen by others through a doorway or window.

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